



In coordination with **Red Presbiteriana para el Cuidado de la Creación**

November 24th  
Isaiah 2:1-5

“Let us walk in the light of the Lord?” As we move closer to the Winter Solstice, it is hard for me to feel like I'm walking in the light of anything. I give thanks for my little pocket pen light to use in those little pockets of town where dusk to dawn lights do not penetrate. I do not need to illuminate the whole neighborhood, just the space where I plan to put my feet. Back at home, most of my garden tools have been cleaned and put away. They might come out again during the winter to clean up after a storm, but most of them will remain in hibernation until the early Spring.

The author of this passage was looking forward in hope to a time when the troubles of today would give way to peace and love. Instead of planning to go off to war, the people would plan to go on a hike. Instead of sharpening their swords for battle, they would bend them into the shape of a plow. We have our own fights. Some fight in street wars with guns and blades, others with paper and laws, others with expensive weapons, and yet others with protest signs. How wonderful would it be if everyone who had protested during this past year were able to turn their signs into stakes for pole beans?! If attack drones were re-purposed to search for lost hikers and deliver the mail?!

Here, Isaiah looks forward to a time when people will join TOGETHER to go to the mountain. His mind is on the future with hope. He isn't where he wants to be, but he is pointing his feet in that direction. In our day and time when the days are getting shorter and colder, in our world where there appear to be so many barriers to peace, let us still look forward in hope. Live in the now, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, comfort the bereaved...and read those gardening books! Sharpen your trowel and research ways to help care for all of God's Creation. The Love of God is HERE AND NOW, and the Light of the World, the Prince of Peace IS COMING!

Eternal and Everlasting God, when we read the news inside and look at the darkness outside, it is easy to lose hope. Guide us in how we can BE the hope by being your hands in this world.

Goal: Take a 15-20 minutes to lay out your plans for Advent through Epiphany. What will you do or not do during that time to focus on HOPE? Will you fast from a particular thing or activity, check on neighbors, take on a devotional like this one, and/or turn off distractions and rest?

Lucy Youngblood  
Shandon Presbyterian Church  
Columbia, SC

November 25th

Isaiah 3:1-5

The old Spiritual, “Down by the Riverside” translates the last line of Isaiah 3:4 as “ain’t gonna study war no more.” The riverside in the song is a place we lay things down: burdens, sword and shield, gun and belt and the shoes some interpret as those a slave would no longer need after running away to freedom. But it’s also the place we put on a long white robe. It’s this last line that clues us in that the transformation which enables us to cease trying to solve our problems through the study of war is that which is initiated in the water of baptism.

Our current economic model is one which puts us at war with nature rather than engendering the harmony God intends. Many of the world’s rivers have become casualties in this war. So there is more than a symbolic connection between the waters of baptism and the riverside in the Spiritual. This became clear in our PEC conference speaker, Andrew Black’s ritual in which small containers of water from rivers throughout the world were combined in the baptismal font as a kind of recommittal to care for the rivers where we live through a reconciled humanity.

We yearn for the day when weapons of war will have been transformed into tools for cultivation and having reached the end of our journey of travelling in the light of Christ’s love and mercy we may lay down our travelling shoes by the riverside in a world at peace with nature.

Prayer for the Day:

Loving God, as I come to the side of the river closest to my home, I pray you would so clothe me in your transforming waters of baptism that I may walk in your ways all my days, and study no more the ways of war against your creatures, the earth and my siblings.

**Amen.**

Rev. Fred Milligan, (H.R.)

Co-facilitator, Presbyterians for Earth Care Advocacy Committee

New York, NY

November 26th  
Romans 13. 11-14

Sunday was falling back time - when we moved our clocks back one hour. It should have been restful, peaceful, to have one hour of extra sleep. Instead, Saturday evening, I run around the house changing clocks and making plans so I do not get to the church an hour early. The dogs and cat are furious that their morning walk is late, and they missed the dawn deer run. Coffee is brewing too early - missed a clock. I go to lunch before the diner opens trying to beat a crowd that is not there at 11 AM. Funny? Sure. But also such a sign of our hubris. In all creation, who would not only decide and set in place a system of time telling to which all other creatures should adhere? Not only do we insist all work and living must continue without interruption in our definition of a day, and then change it to make their lives easier? Cheaper? We do this not once in a millennium but two times a year! How very foolish we are. Paul reminds us to be "awake." To live and be living, to act as children of the light. Not to assume we control anything except our own behavior. Our choices should reflect God's life and light, rather than stroking our egos.

Prayer: "God of all creation. You alone know what time it really is, you alone know what will happen and when the time will be right for us to see your kingdom fully realized. For now, remind us to walk, to live awake, while paying attention to you and your light. Amen

Action items:

- 1- Sleep outside one night. Notice what time you wake up without an alarm clock.
- 2- Take note of who else, what else is waking at that time? Is it the sun that wakes you or the movement of other creatures?
- 3 -Celebrate a night and day free from the structure of a clock

Rev. Dr. Catherine Belles  
Henry Memorial Presbyterian Church  
Dublin GA

November 27th  
Isaiah 11: 1-10

### The Peaceable Kingdom

Today is Thanksgiving Day; this Sunday marks the First Sunday of Advent. Many years these feasts arrive together—one long weekend transforming the end of Harvest season into the beginning of Advent’s spiritual preparation for Christmas. The Second Sunday of Advent (Dec. 7), includes scripture from Isaiah referred to as the Peaceable Kingdom: ...the lion shall lie down with the lamb...”.



Art portraying the Peaceable Kingdom (like this 19th century painting by Edward Hicks) has appealed to me for some time. It’s the visual theology of Isaiah’s prophecy and of Christ’s redemption of all Creation. As I grew in understanding of my faith, however, it sometimes seemed that prayer and worship texts lacked acknowledgment of Creation’s redemption as explicitly as I would have wished.

I’m grateful to be reminded that 2025 is the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, when Christian leaders declared “We believe in one God, the father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible....”. That first Nicene Creed also declared the Son “being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made....”.

It’s heartening to learn that scholars and theologians from many faiths are working to adapt prayers, worship texts, and feast days to include Creation more specifically. They join artists, musicians, and preachers from the past who provided us interpretation and commentary on Isaiah’s prophecy.

As I reflect on these things, I begin Advent in hope. That hope includes a time when all Creation is acknowledged as having a right to life, when predators and prey exist in balance, and when all humanity lives together in peace.

Prayer: Loving God, draw us towards the Light of the World and towards peace with all nature. Most of all, draw us towards peace with others despite our different inner natures.

Action: As dusk falls each evening let us light a candle, pausing briefly to consider how our day has been spent—and how we might spend the coming one.

Carol Mathews  
Stewardship of Creation Ministry  
Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph

November 29th  
Psalm 122

### Seeking Good: The Garden City

I lived for two years in Singapore—the Lion City, the Garden City—teaching English to children. And no offense to New Jersey, but Singapore earned that title. It was an urban jungle where buildings flowed into trees, streets into trails, and kopitiam into gardens and orchards.

Singapore didn't achieve this beauty by accident. They passed (and enforced!) laws to create an urban paradise. They limited the number of cars, banned items that become litter, protected undeveloped land, and controlled how many ships could enter their harbors. Walking to work everyday, I could feel the pride the nation's people felt for this environment they were at one with. The Merlion stands watch like a guardian over the waters, reminding people that caring for the city is part of loving it.

Psalm 122 describes a city "at unity with itself," a place where everything holds together. That's more than urban planning; it's ecological wisdom. God's healing is always about restoring interconnection: people with each other, people with land, land with seasons, life with life. Advent reminds us that Jesus enters our world to bring this unity, to heal the fractures between creation and Creator. Shalom is not a private, spiritual feeling—it is the flourishing of all creation.

Psalm 122 is also a song of homecoming. "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'" Advent is our season of homecoming, reminding that God draws near in real places among real people. Scripture insists that faith is embodied and grounded. It has an address, a city, a community, a land. Jerusalem in this Psalm isn't just a point on a map; it is a symbol of God's dream for creation: where everything belongs, everything is connected, everything is whole.

Advent calls us to seek the good of the places where God has planted us—to be makers of shalom in our neighborhoods, watersheds, and world. To care for creation is to pray, "Peace be within your walls," and to join God in the great homecoming of all things.

**Lord, help us seek the good of our world, to pray for its peace, and to labor toward the unity and flourishing You desire for all creation. Amen.**

*What are some projects happening in your community you can join to help legislate shalom between the people and the land?*

Anthony Saturno  
St. James Presbyterian Church  
Mechanicsburg, PA

November 30th

Psalm 72

Among the many royal psalms of the Psalter, Psalm 72 stands out as unique in redefining “dominion.” The psalm details the king’s job description within the context of creation: mountains, hills, sun and moon, sea and river, gentle showers and fresh grass, flourishing fruit, and abundant grain are all featured in its poetic revelry on royalty. The rule of a just king is like rain falling upon fresh grass. The psalm seems to take its inspiration from David’s final testimony in 2 Samuel: “One who rules over people justly, ruling in the fear of God, is like the light of morning, like the sun rising on a cloudless morning, gleaming from the rain on the grassy land” (23:4). Justice leads to creation’s flourishing. “Dominion” is like the dawn.

But “dominion” is such a problematic concept, and for good reason, in our ecological (and theological) discourse. But “dominion” is different in Psalm 72. The king’s primary responsibility is to establish justice on behalf of the impoverished, to deliver the destitute, and to “crush the oppressor.” “From oppression and violence he redeems their lives” (v. 14). That is how the king exercises “dominion.” In a word, liberation.

Psalm 72 has become important to me in my interpretation of Genesis 1:26. “Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have *dominion* over the fish of the sea . . .’” (NRSVUE). If “dominion” in Psalm 72 is all about the deliverance of the most vulnerable, then what should “dominion” look like in Genesis 1? Not domination, not exploitation, not consumption, not depletion, not a free license. It’s more than stewardship. “Dominion” in Genesis 1 means this: saving the endangered.

Just ask Noah.

***Prayer:***

Gracious God and Creator of us all, teach us in this season of Advent the ways of liberating a groaning creation awaiting its redemption.

***Action Item:***

Keep informed on which species are on the endangered list, such as the IUCN Red List (<https://www.iucnredlist.org/>) or from the Animal Welfare Institute (<https://awionline.org/content/list-endangered-species>), and continue to sound the alarm of species extinction.

William P. Brown  
Columbia Theological Seminary  
North Decatur Presbyterian Church  
Decatur, GA

December 1st  
Romans 15:4-13

When I first read the verses for today's devotional, I immediately thought of my beloved neighbor Sally who recently passed away. Sally and I shared so many loves – books, music, walks, laughter! But, two of our favorites were baking and caring for small animals.

Sally and I shared many recipes over the years. I introduced her to Friendship Bread. She introduced me to Buckeyes. She would call me over when she was trying a new recipe and if I liked it she would send me home with a container for my family. Whenever a new family moved into our neighborhood, if they had small children, they quickly learned that Sally was the "Cookie Lady" as she would show up with a container of homemade cookies to welcome them. When she volunteered at her church she brought cookies for everyone in the office. And when she was diagnosed with cancer she brought cookies to her chemotherapists. It was her way of loving everyone and making sure everyone felt welcomed.

In addition to baking, Sally volunteered with a local animal rescue group. She fostered small dogs for years, caring for the lost and broken as if they were her own, loving them until they found their forever homes.

At one point, a brutally abused dog was brought to the group. She wasn't expected to live. Once she was stabilized, though, Sally took her home and loved her back to life. Daisy had found her forever home! Sally often brought Daisy to my elementary school classes to talk about caring for animals and teaching the children that all of God's creatures were deserving of hope and love.

Though Sally has passed on, she remains a beacon of God's love for everyone.

Prayer:  
Loving God,  
Help us to welcome everyone we meet with Your loving kindness.  
Amen

Practice:  
What can you do today to welcome someone?

Nancy Jones  
Shallowford Presbyterian Church  
Atlanta, GA

December 2nd  
Isaiah 11:1-10

### Nature's Pulpit

The passage of Isaiah I've based this meditation upon talks about how trees and the Holy Spirit go hand in hand. Trees are a very important part of Christian Faith. I am becoming a grandmother in April 2023; I am very excited. Now I wonder if we as a people of God will promote caring for God's creation. Trees give us oxygen to breathe and take away carbon dioxide out of the air. We are losing trees by deforestation at a rapid amount and failing to replace them when gone. A quote by Betsy Painter's book, *A Christians Guide to Planet Earth*:

"Humans have wiped out more than 30 percent of all the planet's forests since postindustrial times, and we've degraded and fragmented swaths of what's left."

Trees are an important part to cultivating Faith and The Holy Spirit: The Bible references a variety of life-giving trees: almond, apple, chestnut, cedar, myrtle, oil, sycamore, mustard, and fig. God made them for provide for creation forever, not to be destroyed for short-sighted goals.

Trees in the Bible offer important lessons. In Genesis with Adam and Eve, apple picking started one of the most recognized biblical lessons. In Matthew 13:23 Jesus compared the Kingdom of God to a tree. Spreading out its considerable branches to care for his creation. Jesus's ministry began with trees and ended with trees. Take a seat and enjoy the service from nature's pulpit, let the Holy Spirit flow through you.

Precious Jesus, Help us to remember your ministry began and ended with a tree. Help us remember to treasure trees for future generations. Help us to always remember nature's pulpit.

Angela Michler (2022)  
Phillips, WI

December 3rd  
Matthew 3:1-12

The ocean seems so vast and wide that it serves as a metaphor for God's love. Its width, depth, and length, though, led many to believe that it was an inexhaustible resource and place where we can make our waste disappear. The message from those who know better is a call to treat our sister with more care. At the same time, more and more of the religious establishment are coming near to the wild places of earth, sensing that something important is happening that they need to either control or get on board with. In John's time, something must have drawn those religious leaders to the wilderness where he was preaching. The message they heard was likely not what they were expecting. John minces no words, calling them a "brood of vipers" and demanding that they "produce fruit in keeping with repentance." He warns them and points them to a certain future, the coming of Jesus, who would bring both judgment and the peace, power, and joy of the Holy Spirit.

During Advent, we anticipate Jesus' incarnation as flesh. This is rightly so, a time of thinking back to this act and its significance for Homo sapiens. Yet we may be tempted to downplay or neglect the importance of this event for all creation. Will our message be focused on one species or will we bring the more challenging, but better news, that Jesus' birth brought healing for all species? John encourages us to be bold and confront a religious establishment that portrays Jesus' birth in partially true ways.

Lord of creation, thank you for the example of John the Baptist. We pray that we might be filled with your Spirit during Advent to speak the truths you give us.

Is your own message of creation care human-centered? Perhaps read something challenging that focuses on biodiversity and theology.

Dr Robert Sluka  
Lead Scientist Marine Conservation Programme, A Rocha  
[www.arocha.org/marine](http://www.arocha.org/marine)

December 4th

Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19

The psalmist prays for the king for the sake of the people. The psalmist longs for a leader who will be guided by justice and righteousness, a leader who will prioritize the wholeness of the people with the land, a leader who will defend the poor against oppressors.

This psalm resonates with our situation today. The poorest people in the world are most impacted by the consequences of climate change and an extractivist economy. The current extractivist economy devours biodiverse ecosystems without concern for their well-being.

We need leaders who are guided by justice and righteousness for the sake of people and for the sake of the Earth, or, as the psalmist exclaims, “May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth.”

As someone approaching middle age, I pray for leaders who will prioritize the wholeness of our shared home, the Earth, not only for our sakes today but also for the sake of our children’s futures.

Prayer: Holy God, our Creator, the Earth is drenched with your splendor. Kindle your love for the Earth in our hearts with your Holy Spirit. Raise up leaders from among us, who will be guided by justice, by a desire for the wholeness of the Earth. Amen.

Action: Go outside. Place your palms to the ground, not as an object but as sacred space. Delight in the sacred ground you walk each day.

Rev. Dr. Sam Codington  
McGregor Presbyterian Church  
Columbia, SC

December 5th  
Psalm 51:10

### Clear Waters, Clear Hearts

In winter, as snowflakes fall—each one a tiny hexagon of divine geometry—we are reminded of the mysterious order woven into creation. Water, the simplest of elements, reflects both purity and presence. When clean, it glistens with light; when clouded by impurity, it loses its transparency. So too do our spirits mirror the waters of the earth.

Masaru Emoto's photographs of water crystals, though scientifically disputed, invite us to wonder: What if our thoughts, prayers, and words truly shaped the world around us? What if creation responds to our reverence—or to our neglect?

Advent calls us to prepare not only for the coming of Christ but for the cleansing of creation itself. The Living Water that entered the world in Bethlehem still flows through all life. When we restore polluted streams and guard against chemicals that harm the vulnerable, we participate in the renewal God began that first Christmas night.

Let us this season make ready both heart and earth—purifying our waters, our words, and our ways—so that the world may again reflect the radiant symmetry of God's love.

### Prayer

Creator of snow and stream,  
Cleanse the waters of the earth and the waters of our hearts.  
May the love born at Bethlehem flow through us—  
To heal what is wounded, to purify what is polluted,  
And to mirror Your beauty in all creation.  
Amen.

Thomas Pakurar, Ph.D.  
The Brandermill Church  
Midlothian, VA

December 6th  
Matthew 3: 1-12

Do we hear “a voice crying out in the wilderness” of our lives? Are we listening in this time of preparation, opening our hearts to God’s great gift of new life in Christ Jesus? Our Advent path unfolds in winter’s stark landscape of darker, colder days, muted hues, and bare tree limbs. As the natural world slows to a new rhythm of rest for renewal; we, too, are invited to slow down and focus on prayerful preparation for Christ’s coming. John’s wilderness in the rugged and isolated Judean countryside lacked distraction or distortion for those who listened. In preparation for the “one who is more powerful than I...,” John calls the people to repentance in the wilderness, a place of clean water, clean air, and simplicity. Our challenge today is to hear the call to repentance and to steward places of clean water, clean air, and simplicity. Planting and nurturing native trees is one way to answer the challenge. As a tree-steward-in-training with the Charlottesville Area Tree Stewards, I’m learning more about trees and how to properly care for them. Trees are our allies in stewarding clean air, healthy ecosystems, and even human physical and mental health. Faithful stewardship of planet Earth is one way we can embody our faith in the world.

**Action item:** Help a local environmental group plant trees and share the vital role trees have on planet Earth with others.

*God of creation and every good gift, help us turn our hearts toward you as we await the precious gift of Christ Jesus.*

Wendy Steeves  
Blue Ridge Presbyterian Church  
Ruckersville, VA

December 7th  
Isaiah 35:1-10

Scorched and sun-baked, ground cracked with a desperate thirst.

This is the desert.

Desolation and destruction. Loneliness and loss.

Synonyms for this sinister place.

At times, it can feel that the creep of this destitution is inching ever closer, slowly turning into a sprint.

Water is polluted so neither beast nor human can drink. Our forests and homes burn. The planet warms and every species is pushed to the brink.

Meanwhile, the powers and principalities plunder on. Who holds them accountable? Who says to them, "Enough! Please. Before it's all gone."

How can we stop this? What brings a desert to life?

Water.

For what is the desert but LIFE waiting in eager anticipation of its emancipation?

Of a seedling dying to flower?

Of a landscape aching to burst into color?

Of love waiting to be returned?

Of a community waiting to be heard?

And there is so. Much. Water.

An eternal well of life that lasts forever!

So why do we tremble? Why do we cower?

The feeble knees will be firmed; the weak hands will gain power.

For there is a river of life that makes the lame to walk

And the blind to see

Opens prisons doors

And sets the captives free.

Where earth is burned, we can reseed

Where seas are polluted, we can redeem.

Where broken systems cannot self-sustain, we can reclaim.

When nations myopically fight, we can re-sight.

So spring up that well,

In your home, your yard, your block!

Spring up that well,

For the lily, the spider, the robin, the fox!

Spring up that well,

In your school, your work, your city.

Spring up that well,

For the friend, the stranger, the partner and the enemy.

And give that life, abundantly.

**Prayer**

Lord, give us your water to bring to dry lands. May your life gush forth and renew your creation.

**Action item**

When landscaping your yard, consider using native plants and encouraging your neighbors to do the same!

Sammy Cowell  
Emmanuel Presbyterian Church  
Thousand Oaks, CA

December 8th  
Luke 1:46b-55

As a pastor who loves to tell stories, I often turn to science fiction as a resource. It's easy to lose yourself in the pages of a good sci-fi novel or dream while immersed in other worlds through a sci-fi film. Some might dismiss sci-fi as escapism, but I would argue that it wrestles with one of humanity's most important questions: What does it mean to be human?

Take, for example, the movie *Blade Runner*, based on the novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* In this futuristic world, humanoid robots called replicants serve as slaves in an interstellar ecological wasteland. Six replicants have returned to Earth seeking to extend their lives, and Detective Deckard is tasked with hunting them down. In the film's climactic scene, Deckard meets his match in the replicant Roy. Roy's fists are stronger and his mind faster—yet Roy chooses to save Deckard's life. He literally "lifts up the lowly," preserving life. Ironically, the android proves more human than the humans! Roy embodies what it means to be made in the image of God.

To be in God's image means caring for creation. To be in God's image means caring for all life. Reflection Question: Consider starting a sci-fi book club in your community. How does our theological claim that we are made in God's image call us to care for creation?

Prayer: God, we give thanks that you look with favor upon us. Empower us to lift up all your creatures, from the birds of the air to the least among us. Amen.

Rev. Matthew Davis  
Mendocino Presbyterian Church  
Mendocino, California

December 9th  
James 5:7-8

*Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.*

It's as true now as it was in the first century—farming and its relative, vegetable gardening, teach patience!

Farmers watch the skies and the weather reports daily, hoping for the right amount of rain to fall at the right time. Plant before the soil is warmed up enough, and the crop will fail. A badly-timed hailstorm, a swarm of grasshoppers, or an early killing frost can dash one's hopes for a successful crop. There is so much that is beyond human control that a farmer must always be ready to say, "Maybe next year. . . ."

In our church's community garden, there are plenty of human factors which likewise teach patience. The person cultivating the adjoining plot may neglect their own weeds and allow those weeds to spread. There are always a few gardeners who fail to read the reminder emails, a handful who don't live up to their promise to tend their section of the mission garden, and too many who don't show up at garden clean-up days. "Maybe next year. . ." becomes a refrain for the garden's organizers.

But learning to wait has its own rewards. This year we celebrated that we were able to donate 7000 pounds of produce to our community's food system, feeding hungry people. Lessons learned over many years, favorable weather, and the efforts of many people working together made that possible.

Tending the earth and receiving its generous gifts, we learn to watch and wait while working. Our life of faith is similar—we watch and wait for the fulfillment of God's reign, working together while we do, looking to the heavens and trusting in the promise, praying once again, "Maybe next year. . . ."

**Prayer:** Gracious God, you bless us with this marvelous earth and its bounty, and you teach us to be patient as we tend your garden. Teach us also to hope for the coming of your realm with confidence that you keep your promises.

**Suggested action:** Contribute to your community's food security by growing healthful food, donating to your community food bank, or supporting local producers.

Jody McDevitt  
St. Andrew Presbyterian Church  
Billings, MT

December 10th  
Psalm 146:5-10

Last October, many in my church were among the estimated 7 million people at “No Kings” rallies throughout the United States. Our standard lectionary today assures us that the Lord will provide food, freedom, justice, and kindness. That’s why we stood along streets for hours.

Putting “the Lord” (eight times in six verses) alongside “No Kings” shows how readily we conflate human leaders with what is holy. “Human governance has evolved” since the world of the scriptures, writes Rev. Dr. Wilda C. Gafney. New sorts of theology have developed, too.

Still relying so much on “Lord” or “King” for the sacred is threadbare cloth. Worse, these words can damage. Nor can I fathom how an all-controlling, top-down model of the Holy One could help us unravel the environmental catastrophes we have made.

The “No Kings” protests heeded the African proverb that former Congressman John Lewis cited often, “When you pray, move your feet.” Physical therapists say, “Motion is lotion” for aches. Movement is good for our bodies and souls, our gatherings, and our Earth.

Hear Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, in March 1965: “For many of us the march from Selma to Montgomery was about protest and prayer. Legs are not lips and walking is not kneeling. And yet our legs uttered songs. Even without words, our march was worship. I felt my legs were praying.”

**Prayer:** We pray to our Just, Compassionate, and Righteous God, Mother of All, (Gafney’s expanded v. 5-10, in part). We pray that our legs and our lips; our songs and our protests bring Psalm 146 more fully to life -- for all the oppressed on Earth.

**Action:** Watch “Persistence, Praying, and Moving Our Feet,” Rev. Jennifer Knudsen’s broader sermon <https://vimeo.com/1129223503> Then gather your courage -- and sunscreen -- and be ready to march.

Phyllis N. Windle  
Rockville United Church  
Rockville, MD

December 11th  
Luke 1:46-55

### **Praying People Prepare -2**

Praying people prepare  
hearing cries of John the Baptist called to bring the Word to us  
to ground, to steady, keep us ready  
in our lives for Earth work God continues to create,  
rising through the ruins of our times.  
Open our hearts to deep abiding prayer  
as You make us stewards of Your Earth,  
making it consistent with Christ's ways.

Lift our hands of Your deep love to minister to all Creation now:  
plant green trees to secure our land, clean our air,  
bring beavers to absorb rainwater's flow,  
clear all waste, restoring space for ocean's precious life  
making Your Sacred world a tended, watered, breathing place  
for all to share.

We must act now as would our Christ:  
to live His truth, His way, His life  
a sparer, grateful way with only what we need.

In dried flowered fields, warming sea shores, & fewer mushroomed mountainsides  
we heed their needs & walking, find John Baptist's voice.  
Then with clarity, we will proclaim  
needs of oceans, river, plants; animals, water life & birds  
lands losing water fast, destroyed by flood or flame.  
We must reach & teach  
to stop more pain in Mother Earth's unbalanced life  
to heal the rest of what remains;  
transforming this to sing  
Sustainer God with us in prayers,  
and we, with you in life,  
for guidance in our work to build Your world anew.

Oh, Mother Earth

**Prayer:**

Creator & Sustainer God,

We are deeply grateful for the beauty of Planet Earth's complexly inter-related life cycles, and rhythmic systems of life. You have reached some of us with a blessed understanding of the Sacred nature of Mother Earth and her abundant gifts. We, with open eyes, are somberly grieved by the destruction of extractive actions, failure to use wisely & tend the resources with which you have bestowed us as a small part of Earthly life. You have revealed to us, in parts (recently through Rev. Dr. Grace Ji Sun Kim), the profound dynamic nature of Earth's Creation and its varied forms of life. Yet greed, and love of power loom, fueling death of forests, pain in extinctions, and indeed cries of Mother Earth, herself, in atmospheric rivers, extreme hurricanes, floods and terrifying fire tornadoes.

Please, God, strengthen us as we work to heal these wounds of Earth, even expanding into Your Universe. Please nurture us through the demands of our efforts to bring healing to Mother Earth and her place among the stars. Thank you for glimpses of Your continuing presence in star nurseries and in lessening presence yet always heart healing, rainbows and birdsong, firm mountains and glimpses among sun glare & heat of azure skies, gentler billowing alabaster clouds. And in stories, my oldest granddaughter shared of taking care of pigeons at the dumpster outside her work, and the baby bird covered with ants. I love Your presence in those ways. With great love, Betsy Diaz, your servant.

Betsy Diaz Ph.D 11/16/25

La Mesa Presbyterian Church, NM

El Paso Interfaith Power & Light & its Sacred Land & Water Committee

NM Water Advocates, & in the past year, PEC Biennial Earth Care conference team

December 12th  
Luke 1:46b-55

Mary's song is famous, you've probably sung it, or heard it many times. It is very similar to Hannah's prayer in I Samuel 2. It plays an important role in identifying the setting for the Gospel of Luke as a Gospel for the poor, the oppressed, those on the margins. Author, activist Valarie Kaur said: "...the longer I spent listening to the stories of marginalized people, tending to their wounds, the more I heard a deeper longing...for a future where we were all safe and secure in our bodies, free to pursue our dreams, ...we could resist with all our might... [but what we needed was] to reimagine the world."

How does the song of Mary help you to reimagine the world? How do the power of these words speak to your heart?

On a chilly autumn afternoon, I had my feet in an Adirondack Lake. The sun was slowly setting, but was still imparting a warmth to the water. The yellow glow of the sun was reflected in the water, so that the waves looked like strands of gold. The slight warmth on the cooling lake caused an amazing ripple effect. The gold waters danced in interlocking patterns, creating works of art around my toes - grids, ripples, waves, chains of gold.

Mary saw this awesome nature of God, she trusted in it, though she didn't see much change to the social situation in her lifetime. Perhaps her change was within, perhaps because she said yes, the intricate patterns of interlacing love filled her and created a new life, a reimagined life.

Go for a walk in nature today or look out your window and ask for an experience of awe.

God of Love, help us to see beyond the ordinary to the awe and wonder available to us because of amazing grace. Guide us to reimagine a world where love reigns.

by Rev. Dr. Naomi C. Kelly  
Nicolls Memorial Presbyterian Church, Weaving Home (NWC)  
Old Forge, New York

December 13th  
James 5:7-10

Preceding James 5:7-10, James writes about the rich people weeping because their “riches have rotted” and their “gold and silver have rusted.” Continuing on, James writes “you have laid up treasures for the last days” and that they kept back wages of laborers by fraud. James ends this passage with “you have condemned and murdered the righteous one who does not resist you.”

James 5:7-10 offers a response to the cruel actions of the rich who treat their laborers unfairly: be patient in your suffering and strengthen your hearts.

Although James wrote these words 20 centuries ago, they sound very familiar to what is happening now in our federal government. The current administration is firing employees, telling others to work without pay, cutting grant funding for research and researcher pay, and holding back funding for food from low-income citizens.

Are we living in the first century or is this really the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the United States of America? Is what we are witnessing human nature or human greed?

How does one have patience and strengthen one’s heart in suffering? We are social creatures and thrive on being with others in similar situations. We are also people of faith who have seen what God can do. This is a very difficult time for those who have lost their jobs, who are working without pay and for those who are not getting the amount of food that they have relied on for possibly years.

For those like me who are not suffering these setbacks, we can provide help in terms of reaching out to those affected, having compassion and possibly offering some assistance.

Food banks and organizations that serve free meals need donations to handle the increased need. Volunteers are vital to social service organizations and need more to cover the new demand. Take time to think and pray about what God is calling you to do in the face of this crisis.

Prayer: Creator God, you have generously given us all that we need and there is enough. Soften the hearts of those who have more than enough to have compassion on those who are suffering without enough.

Action item: Spend five minutes to make five calls to make your voice heard and demand funding SNAP to its originally approved amount.

<https://5calls.org>

Jane Laping  
First Presbyterian Church  
Asheville, NC

December 14th  
Romans 1:1-7

**Jesus lives here.**

When Paul opens his letter to Rome, he doesn't begin with an escape plan but with the reminder that God has stepped into our world "according to the flesh." Advent tells the same truth: Jesus chose **this** place as home. Sometimes we become so focused on the perfect world prepared for us that we forget God is deeply invested in the one we're standing on. Salvation in Scripture is never about abandoning earth, it's about the renewal of this beloved place and the renewal of us.

Paul blesses the Roman church with grace and peace or shalom: the deep healing that restores people, land, and creation. Shalom is not a private comfort but a global need and a global work. If God has honored creation by entering it, then honoring creation is part of our calling. Advent is not simply a message pointing toward resurrection and the world to come; it is a reminder of our vocation now: to steward God's healing here on earth as it is in heaven.

We participate in the coming of God's kingdom. Through the labor pains of Mary, through the small cry of an infant in Bethlehem, God began the work of making all things new. The degrading of creation is a degrading of our spirit, of our neighbors, and of the world God made good. It is a degradation of the very place Jesus called home. To join God's kingdom is to work for the restoration of the earth to the shalom it once knew and will know again.

*Lord, have mercy on us, and help us to be co-creators of Your shalom here on earth... the place You have called home.*

**Today, take a walk around your neighborhood. Go slowly and notice, how can you bring shalom to this place that you call home today?**

Rev. Anthony Saturno  
St. James Presbyterian Church  
Mechanicsburg, PA

December 15th  
Isaiah 7: 10-16

Isaiah is prophesizing for the first time after responding to God's call, saying "Here I Am; send me!" It is a prophecy to Ahaz during a time of war, but it can be interpreted to be a prophecy for creation as well. It is a prophecy that Ahaz did not want to ask God for, fearing to test God. Isaiah prophesized for God anyway. It is a prophecy with a sign of hope and a sign of despair. These are the same feelings we have about creation – hope for its future, despair at its current situation. What is the hope in this prophesy? There will be a child born named Immanuel – God with us. And that child will eat curds and honey – a sign of the abundance in God's creation. What is the despair? The land of the kings Ahaz has been at war with, but with whom he is considering an alliance, will be destroyed – a sign of despair about God's creation.

How are we going to hold on to hope in this season of Advent and not end up in total despair? At the center of the prophesy is the child, Immanuel, God with us. In all that we do for creation, God is with us. The prophesy is given to a king. It is the kings, rulers and governments who hear the prophesies that should lead them to action. In our current days, the government has a lot of power to affect what happens to God's good creation and we can advocate with the government.

Is there hope? In this season of anticipation, we are reminded that the child we are waiting for is God with us. And God will be involved in whatever we do for God's creation.

Prayer: Creator God, in this Advent Season of anticipation, help us to build our strength to bring about a restored creation, knowing that you are present in our current situation, now and always.

Action: Research the environmental legislation that is currently under consideration in your state and advocate with your local officials.

Sue Smith  
Atlantic Highlands, NJ

December 16th  
Matthew 1:21

My work with the Presbyterian Hunger Program invites Presbyterians to ask themselves tough questions in regards to their daily purchasing choices and those impacted on the other end of our supply chains. What would it mean to live more simply? Who is impacted when we don't? What can we do about that?

We all know that everyday life is sustained by materials from the Earth—food, clothes, cell phones, cars, beauty products and there is only so much to go around. The pressures of having all the “extras” during the holiday season aside, the average American consumes 120 pounds of these materials each day. This per person consumption could support the equivalent of 2 Japanese, 11 Indians or an astonishing 18 Haitians.

During the holiday season it's particularly easy for these questions to be drowned out by the loud voices of advertisements that feed our consumerism. Hopefully though, in this time of eager waiting for the coming of the ultimate gift as told to us in Matthew 1: 21 *“She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,<sup>[a]</sup> because he will save his people from their sins.”* We can reflect also on Luke 12:34 which reminds us that *“...life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. For where your treasure is, there your heart be also.”* One of the sins we can be saved from through the coming of Christ is the sin of overconsumption. This drive toward overconsumption can distort our understanding of our true treasure.

For many people, intentional reflection on where this treasure is, leads them to a desire for a simpler life. A life of Christian simplicity, even during the holiday season doesn't mean giving up everything good. It does mean cutting back , reducing harm, choosing our purchases wisely, caring for Creation and acting out Gospel Values whenever purchasing or disposing of anything. These considerations do come as acts of intentionality.

**Activity:** One act of intentionality this holiday season could be to invite your family, church or Sunday School class to replace making wish lists with compiling lists of your current wants vs. needs and have a discussion.

Jessica Maudlin  
Associate for Sustainable Living & Earth Care Concerns  
Presbyterian Hunger Program

December 17th

Isaiah 7:10-16

In Isaiah's day, a child will be a sign for the people that what they fear most, two warring kings, will come to an end. The child will be called Immanuel, "God with us."

Today, as we face environmental catastrophes, I am searching for signs, signs of hope and love amidst despair and fear. Children and young people are showing up and speaking up with courage and tenacity. They are, for me, like signs that God continues to be with us.

Recently, in Montana, sixteen young activists, between ages five and 22, argued that the state violated their right to a clean environment. Montana's Supreme Court upheld a decision that sided with the students; the students successfully argued that a state law banning the consideration of climate when choosing energy policy was unconstitutional.

Young people today inspire me not to lose hope, to keep the faith, and to live with courage.

Prayer: Holy God, our Creator, your Spirit animates the lives of young people who are standing up and speaking up for justice and for the life of the Earth. Make our hearts and minds attentive to the ways in which we can join them in speaking up for this Earth you love. Amen.

Action: Put up a sign, perhaps on a sticky note in your home, which can be a signal of hope to remind you of the good work many people are doing around the world. You can take a look at the Earth Law Center's website for stories of good work being done.

Rev. Dr. Sam Codington  
McGregor Presbyterian Church  
Columbia, SC

December 18th  
Psalms 80:7

**Kneading Hope**  
Change Our Sad Situation

I love making bread!

There is something beautiful in the process, in the transforming texture, in the aromas and flavors that fill our hands and our homes. While kneading, and in the hope and confidence nurtured as the dough rises. In the waiting and anticipation, while the loaf bakes, is a reminder that it is worth the wait.

Challah is a braided, sweet, and soft bread, traditional to the Jewish people, which is broken and shared at the table to welcome Shabbat. Its delicious flavor adds refreshment and hope to life and symbolizes unity, faith, and the connection between the land and the sacred. The bread and tears described in verse 5 represent the bitterness the people were experiencing. The renowned poet of Israel, Chaim Nachman Bialik, recalls his mother's tears falling on the bread as she kneaded the challah and prayed. In the midst of that prayer, perhaps like the psalmist, she cried out: "Change our sad situation," for she had been widowed with seven children in utter poverty. "Lord, save us!"

That is the cry of Advent. In this unprecedented time of ecological challenges, armed conflicts, and longing for peace and a return to what we once were, as verse 7 says, let us join hands to knead hope; praying together, seeking answers and solutions, returning to the Word of God, watching and waiting for the bread that is to come down from heaven (John 6:51), Christ Jesus.

May no one lack bread! This Advent week, I invite you to visit a person or family in need. Bring them a sweet bread, pray, and remind them that the Lord changes our sad situation.

Prayer: Lord, may we never lack the bread of hope.

Rev. Arelis Cardona  
Pastor  
Presbyterian Church in Monteflores  
San Juan, Puerto Rico

December 19th  
Hebrews 10:5-10

### **Here, to do your will**

We humans are creatures of habit; we learn from them and form routines. Thus we grow and develop, and make them such a part of our lives that they become automatic acts of our life. That is why it is so important to reinforce good habits regarding creation care. One way we intend to help reinforce these habits is through these daily devotionals that help us connect two good Christian traditions: the Advent and Christmas season with the care of creation. After all, isn't this God's purpose in becoming incarnate? To save His creation.

We encourage you to incorporate creation care as a daily habit, for this reason year after year, we invite you and accompany you through this reflection journey. In times of so many crises, including the environmental and climate ones, it is necessary that we stop, pause, and work with all our strength to fulfill God's will: to love, care for, and protect His blessed creation.

**Prayer:** Lord, help us to do your will. Amen.

Gloria D. Lozada De Jesús  
Presbyterian Church in Bayamón, Puerto Rico

December 20th  
Matthew 1:18-25

### **Paying attention to our dreams**

For me, dreams happen when I am both sleeping and awake. I get a bit dreamy when I'm swimming, causing me to lose track of my lap count. I dream about one thing or another, what might happen in the days or weeks ahead, finding a way through to the other side of a thorny issue, or the possibilities that exist when I say yes to God. In today's text, Joseph says yes as he commits to marrying Mary after dream-delivered instructions reassure him it is ok to marry this pregnant woman. Matthew is rich in dream narratives: the magi are warned not to report back to Herod after visiting Jesus, Joseph is instructed to take his little family out of Bethlehem to escape Herod's malevolent murder of male children, Joseph learns of Herod's death from a dream-directive, and finally, Joseph is told to go to Galilee, giving us insight into how Jesus gets to Nazareth. These dreams keep Jesus safe.

What dreams do you have for caring for our world? Just as Joseph dreamed about keeping Jesus safe, what are our dreams to care for creation and keep it safe from thoughtless actions and desecrations by our current culture? For all God's people, my big dreams are to:

- Reverse climate change drivers by moving away from extractive energy sources and repairing the scars that fossil fuels have left on the Earth, air, and water. This is a multi-generational effort, but I can contribute to it, knowing that I will likely not see it completed.
- Restore clean water access as I care for a precious resource that is in great demand around the world and whose quantity is finite.
- Regenerate biodiversity by planting native plants. Anyone from 2 to 92 can put a native plant in the ground.

Dreaming and then acting on what we can do to care for the world that is entrusted to us to steward, which is clearly both a gift and a challenge. You will be challenged for sure, and along the way you will meet wonderful, smart, thoughtful, caring helpers. I'm grateful to walk with you in this dream work.

Prayer: Creator of all that is good and beautiful, move into our dreams and inspire and direct us to find ways to be healers of your earth. Be in our big dreams for creation care and let us find individuals and communities with whom to partner to make these dreams a reality.

Action item: Dream and act on one thing you can do for creation—is it advocacy, preparing a garden for spring planting, honing a creation-care overture for our next GA, or your idea here?

Rev. M. Courtenay Willcox  
Northampton Presbyterian Church  
Holland, PA

December 21st

Psalm 80: 1-7, 17-19

We are coming to the end of our year; a time when our “signs” may be intersecting and are somewhat confused. We reach out to you for our security and salvation, but we no longer feel your hand gripping ours. Have you stopped caring for us? Have you turned your smile away from us and have left us in darkness? Have we behaved so badly that you now desert us and leave us to our enemies’ ridicule and laughter. Transform us again to the people that you rescued from slavery so long ago. Teach us again your ways.

Lord, we realize that we cannot do this without your help. You and you alone have taken us to this place. You have guided us and taught us to be self-sufficient, growing vines and cedars. But now you no longer protect those vines and plants. We have grown indifferent to our call and returning the action of care to you, instead of ourselves being the caretaker. Are you leaving us in darkness?

NO! Please, Lord, recognize our need for you and once again walk alongside of us.

Our days have grown darker and darker. Yet you do reach out to us and give us light! During this time when our pagan counterparts see the darkness and worry that the end might be near, fearing the extinguishing of the candles (Winter Solstice), we embrace the candles (Advent) that are lit to bring us to Christ’s entrance into our world. You, Lord, give us this sign...you smile your blessing smile; **THAT WILL BECOME OUR SALVATION!**

Prayer: Good and gracious God, how many times do we turn our backs on you only to feel your presence waiting for us to turn around and find your open arms. Thank you, Lord, for your patience in reaching out to us and still being loving enough to hear our prayers and take action.

Action item: As you are preparing your house and grounds for the holidays, don’t do plastics when possible. Plant or decorate with potted items, such as poinsettias, Christmas Cactus, or even a small tree for your apartment. Handmake ornaments from organic materials.

Barbara Hassall, RE  
The Sanctuary Church  
Fort Lauderdale, FL

December 22nd  
Isaiah 62:6-12

The prophets speak of a hopeful day when God shall redeem and restore all. I believe the truth of this vision, but wonder about how the centering of this vision on the city fails us. My focus is drawn to the many human-made elements that are associated with what this vision of redemption looks like. Walls and courts, gates and cleared highways, fields zealously protected if not fenced in outright.

The prophet is understandably offering a vision of hope that makes sense to the Israelite audience. Their holy city restored after exile and destruction. However, for we who do not live in Jerusalem, and for we who have witnessed the devastating results of our human greed and overconsumption on the planet in the ensuing millennia, does this vision really hold?

A favorite childhood book of mine by Bill Peet tells the story of the Wump world, a peaceful herbivorous species that lived out their days on their lush planet. One day, humanoid aliens arrive, paving over the whole of the planet and driving the wumps to survive underground, eating moss and sipping trickles of water in the gloom. When the aliens have exhausted the planet, they depart. The wumps emerge to find their world paved and polluted. They eventually discover one small grassy patch, relishing it and the long road of restoration is promises.

As a people waiting and yearning for Christ, our visioning must include rewilding of creation. Cities are unlikely to go away anytime soon, but I believe our Advent hope calls us to visions of restoration that do not center on cities and what we can build, but on God's creation and what we might grow together.

Rev. Matthias Peterson-Brandt  
Cherokee Park United Church  
St. Paul, MN

December 23rd  
Psalm 30:5

### **A Time to Restore Hope Beyond the Ruins**

Glaciers melt, oceans heat, storms surge, fires rage, nations harden their hearts, oligarchs tighten their grip on power and wealth. And with all that, discouragement and hopelessness seep into our bones.

And then comes Advent. Not as escape, but as reassurance that God's light has always been born out of darkness.

The child we await does not arrive in safety or splendor. He comes into a world bent by empire, wrapped in swaddling clothes and vulnerability. His mother sings of justice when the proud are scattered, the lowly lifted and the hungry filled. Advent is the season when we dare to believe her song again.

In a cold climate of anxiety, God invites us to plant seeds nevertheless. In our despair over division, God calls us to community, that stubborn, sacred work of love. Advent hope is not optimism; it is defiance. It is choosing to see life where the world predicts only decay and ruin. It is believing that creation's story is not finished, because the Creator is still at work.

Advent teaches us to wait, but not passively. We wait as midwives, tending to the birth of something new. We compost our fears into courage, our grief into compassion, our anger into justice. The barn-born babe is not confined to manger or sanctuary. He appears in every act of mercy, every voice for peace and justice, every hand that restores the earth.

We symbolically light candles not to banish the darkness, but to declare that, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning".

#### **Prayer:**

God of light and life, awaken in us a hope fierce enough to heal the earth and tender enough to love our neighbor. Come, Lord Jesus, and renew your creation. Amen.

Gary Simpson  
Pittsboro Presbyterian Church  
Pittsboro, NC

December 24th

Luke 2:8-20

In the story of Luke 2:8-20, we see God revealing Himself not in palaces or temples, but in the middle of the field, in the night, and in the simple life of the shepherds. The good news of Jesus' birth comes first to those who live close to the earth, caring for animals, attentive to the rhythm of creation. It is as if God, Mother and Father, chose to embrace, in a single scene, all of creation: the sky that lights up, the earth that listens, the shepherds who are amazed, and the child who is born vulnerable, sharing our fragility.

In Jesus, God, Mother and Father, becomes near and reminds us that the entire creation is the object of His/Her tenderness. This is not a distant God, but One who keeps watch in the night, accompanies the shepherds' fear, transforms their terror into joy, and sends them out as witnesses. God's care is not limited to the human soul: it reaches bodies, fields, animals, the concrete history of the people. The manger becomes a sign that no place is too humble for God's glory to dwell.

This scene also invites us to recognize how God continues to care for creation today: sustaining life in the midst of violence, poverty, and injustice, and calling us to participate in that care. Just as the shepherds ran to see the child and then shared what they had seen and heard, we are called to guard the work of God, our Mother and Father's hands: to protect the earth, defend the dignity of every creature, and proclaim with our lives that God's peace wants to reach all of creation.

### **Prayer**

God, Mother and Father, who in Jesus became small and near, thank you for your loving care over all creation. You who lit up the night of the shepherds, illuminate also our shadows and teach us to look at the world with Your eyes of tenderness. Make us guardians of Your earth, defenders of life and of the dignity of every creature. May we, like the shepherds, know how to listen to Your voice, draw near to the manger, and go out to share Your peace.

Amen.

RE José Rosa Rivera  
Stated Clerk, Presbiterio de San Juan  
San Juan, PR

December 25th  
Luke 2:1-7

### **"On the Road to Bethlehem: God is born in the land that groans"**

Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem is neither romantic nor voluntary. It is the result of an imperial order, a census to control, possess, and exploit. It is a violent journey, in conditions of vulnerability. Because Mary is pregnant and they are poor, they cannot find a place to rest. And yet, in this context of exclusion and precariousness, God decides to be born.

This is the perfect setting to reflect on the climate crisis and what it means to walk toward Bethlehem today, not only geographically but theologically: to walk toward a world where justice and life can be reborn.

Today, millions of people walk as they did: forced by drought, the loss of their crops, deforestation, and extractive mining, among other situations. Many women, like Mary, carrying life in their wombs, are also forced to leave their lands.

This is how we discover that women like Mary represent not only a mother, but also the displaced mothers of the Earth, the guardians of water, the indigenous peoples who fight for the forest that gives them life. She carries hope in her body, in a world that ignores her. At the moment of birth, there is no room at the inn. And so, God is born in a stable. Is this not also the condition of the Earth today? Are we not expelling creation from the center of our decisions, reducing it to a resource, a commodity, and property?

In Bethlehem, God is born outside the system, on the margins, alongside the animals, in direct contact with nature. God embraces the dust, the mud, the straw, the fragility of life. That is where the Kingdom begins.

This year, 2025, the world will gather in another Bethlehem, in Brazil, to decide on the future of the planet. This is not just a diplomatic meeting. It is a prophetic Bethlehem: will a new pact for climate justice be born there? Or will the most vulnerable once again be denied a place?

We, communities of faith, have a responsibility to walk towards Bethlehem with the awareness of Mary, with incarnate hope and the conviction that God continues to be born where there is life, struggle, and dignity.

Today, every community that cares for water, defends a forest, welcomes a migrant, or listens to the cry of the Earth is an open manger, a place where Christ is reborn. Let us walk towards Bethlehem with a willing heart, with living faith, and with the conviction that justice is not a theory, but a possible birth.

**Prayer of Confession:**

We confess, as humanity, that we have wounded your Creation; we have closed the door to those who migrate because of hunger and destruction. We confess that we have ignored the cry of the Earth, the cry of the poor.

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Make us an open inn and not a closed wall. (Silent reflection).

God of life, walk with us to Bethlehem. May your justice be born again.

**Call to action:**

Seek or support vulnerable people in your midst: migrants, women, youth, to share bread, solidarity support, creating a manger of solidarity for those who suffer.

**Angela Trejo, Mexico**

January 6th  
Matthew 2:1-12

In contrast to passages in the Old Testament, where astrology is rejected as a pagan science and dreams are viewed with suspicion, the author of the Gospel of Matthew incorporates both and presents them as means of grace and divine revelation. For Matthew, the birth of the Son of God from heaven and earth could not be otherwise; it required the participation of God's Creation and is revealed to those who seek God's truth in each of their contexts.

Despite the diversity of approaches and spiritual experiences, it becomes clear that none of the characters in the story will be able to understand what God is doing without the help of the other:

- The angel reveals God's plans to Mary and Joseph (Mt 1:18-25), and both follow it faithfully.
- The priests and teachers of the law, although they knew the prophecies about the birth of the Son of God in Bethlehem (Mt 2:5-6), need the wise men from the East to understand that the time has come; but do not receive it as good news and seek to destroy God's plans.
- The wise men from the East understand the meaning of the star, but they need the written Word of God, to find the exact place of birth.

In the passage from Matthew, God reveals God's truth in Creation, guides people through it, and human diversity helps us find God's message so that it can become Good News for the whole world, especially those who seek to follow God's will.

### **Homiletic Considerations for climate justice**

The Magi on their way to Bethlehem point out that just as no one could understand the will of God the Creator without the help of others, finding solutions to the climate crisis requires spiritual, historical, moral, and ecological discernment. This discernment is nourished and strengthened by the dialogue of knowledge, especially with the voices of those who have been excluded and crucified; those for whom the healing of the climate and the Earth is liberation and therefore, Good News.

In their attitude of following the star and not being satisfied with merely knowing that the Son of God had been born, the wise men from the East invite us to leave the safety of our temples to seek, find, and know the living and universal Christ, of whom Creation itself speaks to us of.

The story of the wise men from the East is relevant in the face of the human conflicts that we continue to have today due to religious, racial, and gender differences. These conflicts are provoked and even made into law by sectors that do not want compassion or human solidarity, for fear of losing privilege and power. In the climate crisis, these sectors, which are primarily responsible for the climate crisis, have names and surnames; they are the fossil fuel extraction industries (Saudi Aramco, ExxonMobil, Shell) and other oil and gas giants financed by states and large banks. In global climate

negotiations, the governments of rich, industrialized nations systematically block the phase-out of fossil fuels and withhold climate finance for adaptation and reparations for "loss and damage" for climate-vulnerable nations.

Dangerously, when we promote campaigns for a just transition that ignore the social, economic, and ecological impact on indigenous communities in the Global North and South, where the minerals needed for the new technologies of the *Green Economy* are found and extracted, we perpetuate the ideology of the powerful, the exclusion of indigenous peoples, and ultimately, the common good.

The story of the astrologers from the East in the context of the Gospel of Matthew invites us to make an intercultural, interreligious, and ecological reading of faith in our cultural context, to find new and ancestral wisdom that will help us incorporate the Church into the journey to meet Christ, and Climate Justice.

**Prayer:** God of all creation, give us humility, surprise us! Lead our journey to find your Wisdom to protect life, the most vulnerable and future generations; so all your creatures and all peoples, are able to enjoy your Love for Creation. Amen.

**Call to action and further reflection:**

- Who are the excluded and crucified communities in your context, and what are they saying about climate justice?
- How can faith help us listen to the language of the earth and the excluded, including climate change as the groaning of Creation; indigenous peoples, and migrants in our midst.
- Incorporate spiritual practices into your church life that inspire contemplation, wonder, and study of Creation

Rev. Dr. Neddy Astudillo

Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary of California Lutheran University

This devotional was created in partnership with Red Latina para el Cuidado de la Creación, allowing us to provide these meaningful devotions for the Advent season in two languages. We are grateful for the collaboration, as we share the same call to advocate for the care for God’s Creation.

Presbyterians for Earth Care (PEC) invites individuals and congregations to participate in the growing earth care movement within the PC(USA) and beyond. PEC is a national eco-justice network that cares for God’s creation by connecting, equipping, and inspiring Presbyterians to make creation care a central concern of the church.

Presbyterians for Earth Care (then Presbyterians for Restoring Creation) was founded in 1995 as a national, grassroots organization to support people of faith working towards “environmental wholeness with social justice.” PEC helps the church to fulfill its current environmental policies, to create new policies and practices, and to energize and educate church members about eco-justice, the well-being of all humankind on a thriving earth.

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